Saskatchewan
Environment
and Resource
Management
Parks and
Special Places Branch
SASKATCHEWAN'S
PROVINCIAL PARKS
DIRECTIONS FOR
THE 21ST
CENTURY
PROGRESS
REPORT

SASKATCHEWAN
PARKS

Note: where text is italicized throughout, the source is *Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks. Directions for the 21st Century* which was produced and distributed in July, 1997.

Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks: Directions for the 21st Century

Progress Report

The Vision

Provincial parks are a comprehensive network of diverse recreational and protected, natural and cultural areas. Our parks provide a variety of opportunities for the well-being, inspiration, appreciation and benefit of all peoples. Sound economic principles and environmental stewardship are the foundations for managing our parks co-operatively.

Introduction

In July 1997, the report Saskatchewan's Provincial Parks: Directions for the 21st Century was released. This report established a vision for the parks system in the future, the core values which were to be retained, the guiding principles to be used in making decisions and six strategic areas in which directions for future actions were set.

Purpose

This report updates what has been undertaken in the key strategic areas since 1997, and outlines the key actions planned for the next five years and the current challenges and opportunities facing the provincial parks system.

Strategic Areas

- Natural and Cultural Resource Protection
- Recreation
- Interpretation/Education
- Tourism
- Public Involvement/Park Partnerships
- Park Business Management

VALUES

What the parks system must never lose.

Saskatchewan provincial parks provide opportunities to experience a diversity of recreational services and activities and to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors.

The peace and serenity of Saskatchewan's provincial parks allow people to renew their personal and spiritual well-being.

In a natural setting, Saskatchewan provincial parks offer services which are convenient, affordable, clean, secure and accessible to all.

Saskatchewan provincial parks present opportunities for varied teaching and learning experiences from the historical and archaeological to the natural.

Saskatchewan provincial parks preserve a variety of species and settings to experience nature.

Saskatchewan provincial parks are a meeting place for friends and family and for making new friends.

PRINCIPLES

Guiding Rules in Making Decisions

Saskatchewan provincial parks will

- *protect natural and cultural landscapes and resources*
- *be held forever by the Crown in trust for the Saskatchewan public*
- *benefit all people now and into the future*
- *provide public access to outdoor water and land-based recreational experiences*
- *provide a wide range of recreational and experiential learning facilities and services at various locations within the parks system that are compatible with long-term protection*
- *provide safe and environmentally responsible services and facilities*
- *give public benefit precedence over private benefit*
- *ensure public involvement in park management and direction setting*
- *work co-operatively with various governments, non-government organizations, communities, First Nations, Metis organizations, individuals and the private sector*
- *respect Aboriginal and Treaty rights for hunting, fishing and trapping*
- *base actions on appropriate research*
- *make commercial development decisions based on sound financial and business practices*
- *have park customers pay for the personal or commercial benefits that they receive*
- *receive direct financial support from the provincial government for those activities, services and facilities which benefit society*
- *retain revenue generated by parks for use within the parks system*
- *be responsible for, and accountable to, the people of Saskatchewan for resource and financial management*

Strategic Area One:
Natural and Cultural Resource Protection

The Directions

1. *Natural and cultural resource protection will remain a critical function and priority of provincial parks.*
2. *Natural and cultural resource protection will be enhanced.*
3. *Park lands will be models of managing for ecological integrity.*

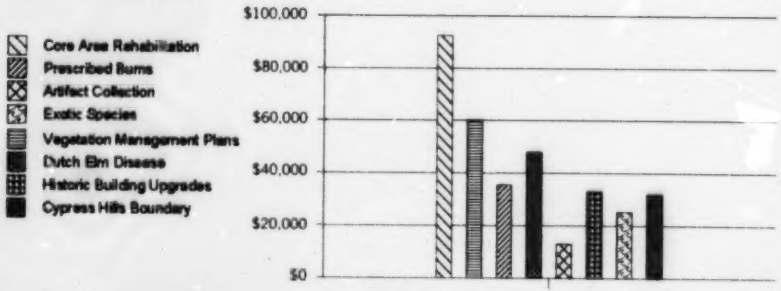
The Accomplishments

A Conservation Action Plan for Natural and Cultural Resources on Park Lands has been completed. This plan establishes global policies or policy directions for natural features, cultural features, resource use - specifically renewable, non-renewable and recreation uses - and management activities. The plan also sets out the expected implementation actions.

Existing specific resource management policies have been updated and new policies have been developed to reflect the global policies and give direction on specific resource management issues.

Capital and operating funds have been targeted for resource management projects. An annual allocation of $100,000 in provincial parks capital was established. These funds have been used for a variety of projects addressing pressing resource management concerns.

Resource Capital Budget Expenditures 1997 to 2000



Painting of Holy Trinity Anglican Church Stanley Mission Historic Site as part of Centenary Capital

Centenary Capital funds have also been used to address key cultural resource conservation issues. To date funds have been used to upgrade Holy Trinity Anglican Church Stanley Mission, the oldest building in Saskatchewan and work continues on projects such as the rehabilitation of the Chalet in Moose Mountain Provincial Park and original buildings at Cannington Manor Provincial (Historic) Park.

The areas protected as park lands have expanded since 1997. Two protected areas - Macdowell Bog and Christopher Lake - have been established and Douglas Provincial Park lands have been doubled.

Future Key Actions by 2006

- Increase staff and public awareness of their part in stewardship of park land resources.
- Assess risk to ecological and cultural integrity and establish management priorities.
- Conduct inventories and prepare conservation/monitoring plans for natural environment and wilderness parks and two historic parks.
- Establish ecological health monitoring sites in parks.
- Work with Aboriginal peoples to identify sites of significance and develop guidelines for their use.
- Enhance capacity to manage artifacts and specimens.
- Assess impact of climate change on parks.
- Enhance communications and promote active conservation partnerships.
- Increase funding allocations to conservation and complete the centenary cultural preservation projects at historic parks and the rehabilitation of the chalet in Moose Mountain.
- Initiate a pro-active program to rejuvenate park forest ecosystems.

Strategic Area Two:
Recreation

The Directions

1. *The provision of recreation will remain an essential function of the provincial parks system.*
2. *Existing, basic park facilities will be upgraded or replaced.*
3. *Different recreational experiences, facilities and services will be established for different park lands.*
4. *Provincial park outdoor recreational opportunities will continue to be provided within ready access of major urban centres.*

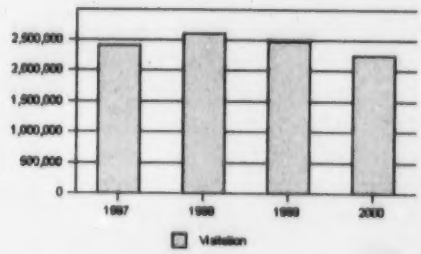
The Accomplishments

Continued operation of most facilities and services, with reduced services at some smaller recreation sites. The extent of the reductions at some sites were modified when local groups indicated an interest in assisting with their operation. Some sites had all services removed and the land retained for access and potential future use.

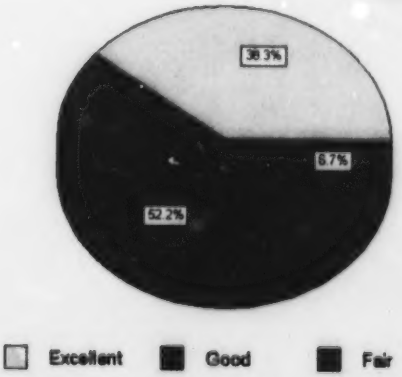
Visitation over the 1996 to 2000 period is 8.4 per cent higher than the previous five-year average. Visitation was lower in 1999 and 2000 than the previous three years due to weather conditions and increased fees.

Visitor satisfaction with park services is high with 90 per cent of those responding to a 2000 survey indicating services to be good or excellent.

Estimated Total Visitation
April to September 1997 to 2000

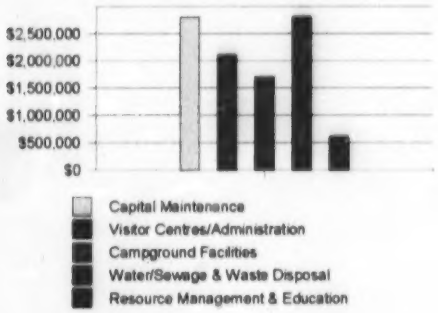


Visitor Satisfaction with Provincial Parks in 2000



Key basic park facilities are being gradually updated with the additional capital funds allocated in 1997.

Total Capital Expenditures April 1997 to March 2001 by Categories



Upgraded Buffalo Pound Entry Office

- Approximately $800,000 annually has been expended on capital maintenance, minor facility upgrading and the replacement of picnic tables and barbecues. Each park is funded in proportion to its facilities and infrastructure. One initiative has been the incremental replacement of barbecues and picnic tables with more durable products to reduce long-term operating and replacement costs.
- On average $560,000 has been spent on visitor centres and administrative facilities to meet Occupational Health and Safety concerns and to improve client services. During these upgrades, older facilities have been removed with the objective of reducing the total number of buildings within the parks system.
- An average $440,000 has been expended annually on upgrading campground facilities with service centres (showers and washroom buildings) renovated or mini centres added to meet demand and with electrical service upgraded to meet current electrical codes and to provide the higher amperage demanded by the newer camping units.
- Approximately $700,000 annually has been utilized to upgrade water, sewage and solid waste disposal.
- Another $200,000 annually has been expended on resource management and education projects as mentioned elsewhere in this report.

Centenary Capital initiative funds, allocated to provincial parks for the 2000 to 2004 period, have greatly speeded up improvements and added key visitor services. These funds have been directed towards the conservation and improvement of cultural resources associated with Saskatchewan's history, on providing a few "enhanced" facilities especially educational facilities and to speed up the upgrading of basic park recreational facilities such as

- park road upgrading;
- campground electrification;
- bath change house replacement at Greenwater Lake;
- environmental clean up at Hansen Lake Recreation Site;
- recreation site improvements in northern Saskatchewan; and
- Canoe Route portage upgrades.

A framework for establishing the level of services and facilities for each park land has been drafted. Key principles of the framework are:

- all park lands are important;
- recreational and educational services will be consistent with a park's resources, purposes and current and potential use;
- basic services at all parks will be maintained and replaced as required according to the park's category of service and individual park's level of service; and
- prior to enhancing services at parks whose categories warrant improvements, the basic services and facilities at all parks need to be at a minimum acceptable standard.

As outlined under the Public Involvement/ Partnership direction, new and/or expanded private sector facilities have added to the range of services available to park clients.

Canoe Route Upgrade at Rapid River in Lac La Ronge Provincial Park through Centenary Capital initiative

Future Key Actions by 2006

- Finalize framework for levels of recreational services after public consultation and begin implementation.
- Completion of upgrades/replacement of administrative/ maintenance buildings to meet occupational health and safety concerns.
- Completion of upgrades to major sewer and water systems.
- All existing electrical systems in campgrounds will be upgraded to meet electrical code and need for higher amperage and electrical service expanded in high demand areas.

Strategic Area Three:
Interpretation/Education

The Directions

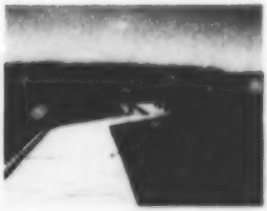
1. *Interpretation/education will continue to be an essential function of provincial parks.*
2. *Different interpretive/ educational experiences, facilities and services will be established for different park lands.*
3. *Basic interpretive/ educational facilities will be upgraded or replaced and new services and facilities may be added where funding permits and the need is identified in an approved plan/strategy.*

Accomplishments

Many self-use interpretive facilities have been upgraded or replaced with approximately $100,000 annually allocated in capital funds. These projects include:

- improving three major interpretive trails, at Greenwater Lake, Duck Mountain and Lac La Ronge;
- developing four new trails, at Meadow Lake and Buffalo Pound and two at Moose Mountain, to replace trails which were no longer serviceable;
- displays have been upgraded at Buffalo Pound and Fort Carlton and new displays put in place at Pike Lake and Greenwater Lake with the latter replacing an older exhibit; and
- five viewpoint and interpretive feature signs have been erected at parks such as Narrow Hills, Meadow Lake, Buffalo Pound and Cypress Hills.

Centenary Capital funds have made it possible to undertake more projects such as an amphitheatre at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park. Some projects are jointly funded by the regular provincial parks capital budget and centenary funds. Improvements include projects such as interpretive trail upgrades at Saskatchewan Landing, Meadow Lake, and program centres at Duck Mountain and Saskatchewan Landing.



Upgraded trail at Moose Mountain Provincial Park

Cypress Hills Amphitheatre built with Centenary Capital funds

First Nations involvement in interpretive programs has increased due to funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to First Nations for joint SERM/First Nations interpretive programs at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park and Meadow Lake Provincial Park.

A provincial interpretation/education strategy has been drafted and two parks, Cypress Hills and Narrow Hills, have drafted park specific strategies.

Future Key Actions by 2006

- Interpretive strategies for a minimum of 10 parks will be drafted.
- First Nations and Aboriginal involvement in interpretative activities will be continued and expanded.
- Nine parks will see interpretive trail upgrades.
- Moose Mountain will have its visitor centre displays upgraded. Display upgrades are also planned for Duck Mountain, Cannington Manor and Wood Mountain Post.

STRATEGIC AREA FOUR:
TOURISM

The Directions

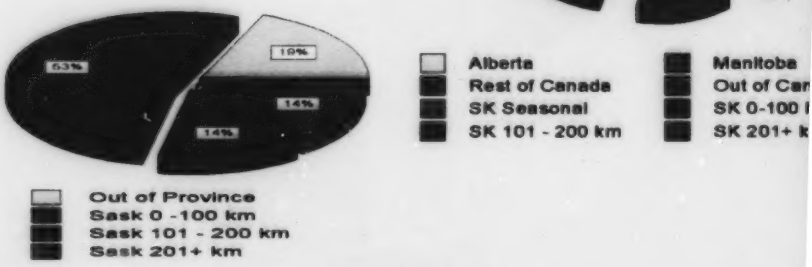
1. *Saskatchewan's park lands will continue to be a key component of tourism by the protection of natural and cultural resources and the provision of recreational and interpretive/ educational opportunities.*
2. *Saskatchewan's provincial park lands will enhance tourism and the economic benefits from tourism by upgrading basic recreational facilities and customer service, and enhancing resource protection, educational opportunities and marketing.*
3. *Saskatchewan parks will work with Tourism Saskatchewan and others to increase inbound and Saskatchewan tourism.*

Accomplishments

Use by people from outside of Saskatchewan, especially Alberta, has increased. At the same time, Saskatchewan provincial parks retain approximately 72 per cent of the Saskatchewan camping market.

A model for determining expenditures by people staying overnight in provincial parks was introduced to refine the projections of economic impact. The model indicates a minimum of $5 million is being brought into the province by out-of-province campers each year. This model was made feasible by the introduction of a computer-based campground registration system referred to as ROS 2000.

The 1995 estimated $125 million economic impact of provincial parks has not been updated but is expected to be greater than it was at that time due to increased visitation.



Origins of Campers

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

A marketing strategy *Market Segmentation and Opportunities Identification* has been completed. This strategy identified five key markets:

1. local/regional - the critical core;
2. Albertans - a growing segment;
3. RVers - a sizeable, growing segment with non-peak potential;
4. young adults - the future of parks visitation; and
5. outdoor adventurers - with a projected existing pent-up demand in Saskatchewan.

Promotional activities were expanded with a focus on attracting specific markets while retaining the existing clients. Some of the activities included a new newspaper tabloid summer park promotional guide, an internet site, advertisements in American Woodall's Campground directory and a direct mail marketing campaign.

Joint initiatives with Tourism Saskatchewan such as information in telephone directories were also undertaken.

Future Key Actions by 2006

- Develop and implement specific marketing strategies for the five key market segments.
- Expand promotional partnerships with the private sector such as CAA Saskatchewan selling entry permits and merchandise and the Husky Oil coupon program.
- Complete a park visitor profile and satisfaction survey and update economic impact data.

Strategic Area Five:
Public Involvement/Park Partnerships

The Directions

1. *Public involvement and park partnerships will become a cornerstone of park management.*
2. *All partnership activities will assist in meeting park management objectives.*

Key Future Actions by 2006

- Increase First Nation/Aboriginal peoples involvement.
- Increase sponsorship/donations.
- Increase individual volunteer activities for value added products.
- Continue private sector businesses in parks.

Accomplishments

Local park advisory committees have been established at 16 more parks bringing the total to 18.

Volunteer campground hosts are now available at 19 locations, up from eight in 1996.

An estimated $2.9 million in enhanced services have been provided through donations, sponsorships or gifts in kind since 1997. To facilitate such contributions a Contributory Partnerships/Sponsorships policy has been developed.

Private sector developments have led to over $5 million in additional facilities within the parks system. They include projects such as the construction of Land of the Loon Lodge at Anglin Lake Recreation Site, upgrades to the M and N log cabins and campground at Meadow Lake Provincial Park, the upgrade and expansion of the Greenhills Golf Course at Greenwater Lake Provincial Park, the addition of 20 fully serviced campsites at Sturgeon River Recreation Site, the start of the Saskatchewan Landing Provincial Park golf course and upgrades to the Cypress Hills Provincial Park golf course.

Land of the Loon Lodge Anglin Lake Recreation Site. Private investment initiative.

Strategic Area Six:
Park Business Management

The Directions

1. *The financial subsidization of park services, facilities and programs will be based on the degree of general public benefit.*
2. *The development or redevelopment of park facilities and services will be based on a benefit analysis.*
3. *Commercial lease arrangements with the private sector will continue to be used when best suited to a park's management objectives and when lessees pay capital, maintenance and operating costs.*
4. *Park operations will use good business practices including incentives for efficiency and entrepreneurship.*
5. *Pertinent legislation and policies will continue to be reviewed and revised with public input as required.*

Accomplishments

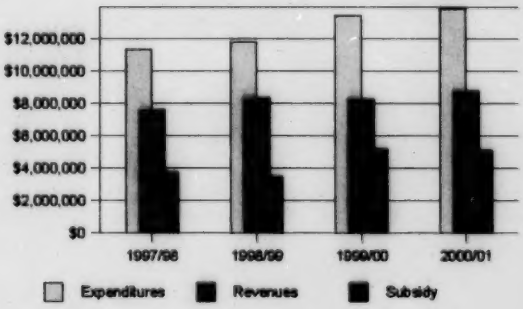
Eleven park manager positions, solely responsible for the day-to-day operation and management of parks, were created with the streaming of operational positions within Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management.

A financial plan for the provincial parks system has been drafted with the intent of balancing operational funding with program expectations, establishing a subsidization framework and identifying funding streams. The plan has led to an expenditure allocation model where funds have been allocated to parks to more accurately reflect the level of services provided and facilities maintained.

The Incentive Based Budget system has been refined to encourage park managers to be more business like in determining where funds from their respective budgets are expended.

Revenues have been increased as well as the subsidy to park operations to reflect increased input costs. The tax based subsidy to the direct operation of the provincial parks system is 37 per cent of the operational costs up from 32 per cent in 1997. Only the Ontario parks system has a lower level of tax-based support to park operations.

Parks System Direct Operational Expenditures, Revenues and Tax-based Subsidy for 1997 to 2000 Operating Period



Avenues to generate revenue from other sources are being explored. They include revenues from the process of rejuvenating the forested park ecosystems, expanded cottage developments and enhancing the sponsorship and partnership initiatives.

Key Future Actions by 2006

- Continue to reduce capital liabilities by removing redundant facilities and reduce pressure on capital replacement budgets by improving preventative maintenance protocols.
- Re-assess commercial lease fees.
- Complete reviews of cottaging initiatives, generating revenue from by products of rejuvenation of the park ecosystems, and other potential revenue sources.
- Initiate legislative changes needed to implement policy initiatives.

Clearwater River Provincial Park

Challenges and Opportunities

The ecosystems/natural resources and cultural resources of provincial parks are under pressure. Forests, due to the suppression of wildfire, are changing in composition, the invasion of exotics and human use are impacting natural areas, and human use and weathering are impacting cultural resources.

Public and client expectations for services remain high with the added expectation that these services will be provided at a reasonable cost. Many do not wish to see fees increased.

More campers expect electrified campsites and many of these want electrified services which support air conditioners, fridges, stoves and lights. Camping units are getting larger and campers want larger campsites and some want full-service campsites with sewer, water and electrical connections. Virtually all campers want access to hot showers and washrooms with flush toilets and sinks. More people want to use their cabins for year-round residency and expect the services which such use entails. People also want clean well-maintained facilities, enhanced recreational and interpretive services such as walking, bike and interpretive trails and playgrounds. Many of the services they want require expanded water and waste disposal systems equivalent to urban communities.

Public and interest groups expect new capital developments and capital upgrading and replacement of non-basic facilities. The capital funding identified in 1997 was based on replacing and upgrading basic facilities. Funding for additional new facilities was not identified.

Changing building, electrical, health and environmental regulations are increasing the costs for capital facilities and operations.

Most people in Saskatchewan travel less than 200 km to visit a park. With the rural to urban movement of population, some parks may see increased use and others less.

The traditional recreational users are growing older reflecting the changing Saskatchewan demographic patterns. Different services and facilities may be required to reflect the changing demographic patterns.

Treaty, Aboriginal and Traditional Rights are still being clarified. First Nations and Metis have rights which can take precedent over other rights and want a greater say in park management, development and operation. The number of Aboriginal people especially in the younger age groupings is growing but these people have not been high users of the recreational facilities.

As well people with low incomes are not high users of provincial park facilities.

SUMMARY

The provincial parks system is seen by the public as a legacy for future generations while being enjoyed by the present. Many steps have been taken to ensure that the legacy is retained and that people can continue to learn from and enjoy the use of park lands. There are many challenges which SERM continues to work to address. SERM and others will need to work together to ensure this legacy continues.